

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-5, 7, 10-17, 19-25, 27, 30-33, 35, and 38-40 are pending in the application. Claims 1-5, 7, 10-16, 19, 21-25, 27, 30-33, 35, and 38-40 are amended. Claims 6, 18, 26, and 34 are newly canceled.

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings and versions of claims in this application.

1. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine adapted for accepting wagers and granting monetary awards, comprising:

a master gaming controller adapted to control game play and authorize payouts and other awards on said gaming machine, said master gaming controller located in a main cabinet of the gaming machine, said main cabinet having a first communications interface having a first configuration or arrangement;

~~one or more major components, wherein at least one of said one or more major components comprises~~ a top box that contains a plurality of peripheral devices and a ~~first~~ second universal communications interface having a second configuration or arrangement, the top box ~~[[is]] adapted to be removable from said gaming machine[[,]] and [[is]] interchangeable with other similar major components~~ top boxes also so adapted; and

a modular universal gaming engine located outside ~~[[the]]~~ said main cabinet and said top box, said modular universal gaming engine having at least one dedicated processing unit, at least one associated storage device, a third communications interface adapted to connect with said first communications interface, and a fourth ~~and a second universal communications interface adapted to connect with said second communications interface, wherein said dedicated processing unit is separate and distinct from said master gaming controller, and wherein said modular~~ universal gaming engine is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices ~~[[on]] contained by said removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box.

2. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box is adapted to detach from said main cabinet.

3. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 2, wherein said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to remain attached to said gaming machine despite any detachment of said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box.

4. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said modular universal gaming engine is interposed between said main cabinet and said top box, and said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box and said modular universal gaming engine are adapted to detach from said main cabinet as a combined unit.

5. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 4, wherein said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box is adapted to detach from said modular universal gaming engine.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim [[6]] 1, wherein said modular universal gaming engine ~~comprises a universal top box engine, said universal top box engine is~~ adapted to control all peripheral devices on said top box.

8-9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to control all of [[the]] said plurality of peripheral devices on the top box.

11. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said modular universal gaming engine contains a power supply adapted to provide power to said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box.

12. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said modular universal gaming engine comprises a communications buffer between said master gaming controller and a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices on said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box.

13. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said dedicated processing unit comprises a central processing unit residing on said modular universal gaming engine.

14. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 13, wherein said central processing unit contains resident operating system code adapted to control functions ~~within~~ associated with said modular universal gaming engine and facilitate communications between said modular universal gaming engine and said master gaming controller.

15. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 14, wherein said resident operating system code is specifically approved for use in [[a]] said gaming machine by a gaming jurisdiction.

16. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 14, wherein said resident operating system code is selected from the group of operating system codes consisting of Windows CE Embedded, Windows XP, Linux, Monta[[]]Vista Linux, and QNX.

17. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said plurality of peripheral devices comprises one or more devices selected from the group consisting of a video display unit, a speaker, an audio amplifier, a light, a touch screen, an input button, a coin acceptor, a bill acceptor, a ticket acceptor, a coin hopper, a coin dispenser, a ticket printer, a card reader and a mechanical motor.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim [[18]] 1, wherein said second ~~universal communication interface~~ configuration or arrangement comprises a standardized layout of physical connections that is consistent across a plurality of other modular universal gaming engines.

20. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 19, wherein said standardized layout of physical connections comprises a grid of ported connections.

21. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 19, wherein said standardized layout of physical connections comprises a power connection adapted to provide power across a mating of ~~universal communication interfaces~~ the second communications interface and the fourth communications interface.

22. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine adapted for accepting wagers and granting monetary awards, comprising:

a processing means for controlling game play and authorizing payouts and other awards on said gaming machine, said processing means located in a main cabinet of the gaming machine and communicatively connected with a first communications interface located on the main cabinet, said first communications interface having a first configuration or arrangement;

a housing means for housing a plurality of peripheral devices associated with said gaming machine and a second communications interface, said housing means being removable from said main cabinet and interchangeable with other similar housing means also so adapted, said plurality of peripheral devices communicatively connected with said second communications interface, and said second communications interface having a second configuration or arrangement; and

a modular universal engine means for controlling a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices housed ~~[[on]]~~ by said housing means, ~~said universal engine means being physically separate from said housing means~~ said modular universal engine means located outside ~~[[the]]~~ said main cabinet and said housing means, said modular universal engine means including a third communications interface and a fourth communications interface, said third communications interface adapted to connect with said first communications interface, and said fourth communications interface adapted to connect with said second communications interface.

23. (Currently Amended) A system of gaming machines adapted for accepting wagers and granting monetary awards, comprising:

at least one computer server, said at least one computer server having a program adapted to provide data regarding individual modular universal gaming ~~machine~~ engines, ~~major components~~ top boxes of gaming machines, or both; and

a plurality of gaming machines in communication with said at least one computer server, wherein at least one first gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines comprises:

a master gaming controller adapted to control game play and authorize payouts and other awards on said gaming machine, said master gaming controller located in a main cabinet of the gaming machine and communicatively connected with a first communications interface located on said main cabinet, said first communications interface having a first configuration or arrangement;

~~one or more major components~~ a top box, wherein ~~at least one of said one or more major components comprises a~~ said top box ~~[[that]]~~ contains a plurality of peripheral devices and a ~~first universal~~ second communications interface, is adapted to be removable from said gaming machine, and is interchangeable with other ~~similar major components~~ top boxes also so adapted, wherein said plurality of peripheral devices are communicatively connected with said second communications interface, said second communications interface having a second configuration or arrangement; and

a modular universal gaming engine located outside ~~[[the]]~~ said main cabinet and said top box, said modular universal gaming engine having at least one dedicated processing unit, at least one associated storage device, a third communications interface, and ~~at a second universal~~ a fourth communications interface, ~~wherein said dedicated processing unit is separate and distinct from said master gaming controller, wherein said~~ third communications interface is connected with said first communications interface, said fourth communications interface is connected with said second communications interface, and wherein said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices ~~[[on]]~~ contained by said removable and interchangeable major component top box.

24. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim 23, wherein said data regarding individual universal gaming ~~machine~~ engines, ~~major components~~ top boxes of gaming machines, or both comprises one or more informational items for such devices, said informational items selected from the group consisting of current location, past locations, time in service, number of retrofits, repair status, included peripheral devices, peripheral device configurations and overall thematic nature of ~~[[the]]~~ said device.

25. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim 23, wherein said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box is adapted to detach from said main cabinet.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim ~~[[26]]~~ 23, wherein said modular universal gaming engine ~~comprises a universal top box engine, said universal top box engine~~ is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices ~~[[on]]~~ contained by said top box.

28-29. (Cancelled)

30. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim 23, wherein said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to control all of said plurality of peripheral devices ~~[[on]]~~ contained by said top box of said first gaming machine.

31. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim 23, wherein said dedicated processing unit comprises a central processing unit residing on said modular universal gaming

engine, said central processing unit containing resident operating system code adapted to control functions ~~within~~ associated with said modular universal gaming engine and facilitate communications between said modular universal gaming engine and said master gaming controller, wherein said resident operating system code is specifically approved for use in ~~[[a]]~~ said gaming machine by a gaming jurisdiction.

32. (Currently Amended) The system of gaming machines of claim 23, wherein said first ~~universal communication interface mates with said second universal communication interface,~~ ~~and wherein said second universal communication interface~~ configuration or arrangement comprises a standardized layout of physical connections that is consistent across a plurality of other modular universal gaming engines.

33. (Currently Amended) A method of replacing a ~~major component~~ top box of a gaming machine adapted for accepting wagers and granting monetary awards, the method comprising:

providing a gaming machine having

a master gaming controller adapted to control game play and authorize payouts and other awards on said gaming machine, said master gaming controller located in a main cabinet of the gaming machine and communicatively connected with a first communications interface located on the main cabinet, said first communications interface having a first configuration or arrangement,

~~one or more major components, wherein at least one of said one or more major components comprises~~ a top box that contains a plurality of peripheral devices and a ~~first universal~~ second communications interface, ~~[[is]]~~ said top box adapted to be removable from said gaming machine~~[[,]]~~ and ~~[[is]]~~ interchangeable with other ~~similar major~~

~~components~~ top boxes also so adapted, said second communications interface having a second configuration or arrangement, and

a modular universal gaming engine located outside ~~[[the]]~~ said main cabinet and said top box, said modular universal gaming engine having at least one dedicated processing unit, at least one associated storage device, ~~and a second universal~~ a third communications interface, and a fourth communications interface, ~~wherein said dedicated processing unit is separate and distinct from said master gaming controller, and wherein~~ said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices on said ~~removable and interchangeable major component~~ top box, said third communications interface is connected with said first communications interface, and said fourth communications interface is connected with said second communications interface;

removing ~~a first major component~~ said top box from said gaming machine; and

installing a second ~~major component to~~ top box on said gaming machine.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[34]]~~ 33, wherein said modular universal gaming engine ~~comprises a universal top box engine located in said housing, said universal top box engine~~ is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices ~~[[on]]~~ contained by said top box.

36-37. (Cancelled)

38. (Currently Amended) A method of changing a game theme on a gaming machine adapted for accepting wagers and granting monetary awards, the method comprising:

providing a gaming machine having

a master gaming controller adapted to control game play and authorize payouts and other awards on said gaming machine, said master gaming controller located in a main cabinet of the gaming machine and communicatively connected with a first communications interface located on said main cabinet, said first communications interface having a first configuration or arrangement,

~~one or more major components, wherein at least one of said one or more major components comprises~~ a top box that contains a plurality of peripheral devices and a ~~first universal~~ second communications interface, said top box ~~[[is]]~~ adapted to be removable from said gaming machine~~[[,]]~~ and ~~[[is]]~~ interchangeable with other ~~similar major components~~ top boxes also so adapted, said second communications interface having a second configuration or arrangement, and

a modular universal gaming engine located outside ~~[[the]]~~ said main cabinet and said top box, said modular universal gaming engine having at least one dedicated processing unit, at least one associated storage device, ~~and a second universal~~ a third communications interface, and a fourth communications interface, wherein said modular universal gaming engine is adapted to control a substantial portion of said plurality of peripheral devices on said removable and interchangeable ~~major component~~ top box, said third communications interface is adapted to connect with said first communications interface, and said fourth communications interface is adapted to connect with said second communications interface;

removing a ~~first major component~~ said top box from said gaming machine, said ~~first major component~~ top box comprising one or more items dedicated toward a first game theme; and

installing a second ~~major component to~~ top box on said gaming machine, said second ~~major component~~ top box comprising one or more items dedicated toward a second game theme different from said first game theme.

39. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 7 wherein said peripheral devices ~~[[on]]~~ contained by said top box include all of the following: a video display, one or more speakers, a plurality of bulbs, a separate progressive jackpot display, and a ticket printer.

40. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 39 wherein ~~[[the]]~~ said video display has a video controller, ~~[[the]]~~ said plurality of bulbs have a separate light controller, ~~[[the]]~~ said separate progressive jackpot display has its own specialized controller, and ~~[[the]]~~ said ticket printer has a printer controller.